



Parents as Teachers®

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on  
The Governor's Proposed FY 2018-2019 Budget  
Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Parents as Teachers National Center  
St. Louis, Missouri**

Chairs Walker, Osten, and Formica, members of the committee, thank you for allowing the Parents as Teachers National Center to submit written testimony regarding appropriations for Family Resource Centers and for the Parents as Teachers services delivered through them. **We respectfully ask that you reconsider the proposed cuts in funding and the restructured access to those funds in this budget and fully fund the Family Resource Centers at the level in the current, FY 2017-2018 budget.**

Parents as Teachers National Center is sensitive to the budget issues facing this body, but also deeply concerned that these cuts will negatively affect the profound work of the Family Resource Centers in engaging with parents and building healthy children that are ready and prepared for school. If we know nothing else, we know that learning begins before birth and that, with the rapid brain development that occurs, the first three years of life are absolutely critical to health, well-being, and success in school, life and work. Yet, by age 3, there is already a 30-million word gap<sup>i</sup> between children from the wealthiest and poorest families, and without intervention these children will find it harder, if not impossible, to ever catch up. These early years are not only a time of learning to read, count, and understand the world around them, these are the years when a strong foundation of executive function and self-regulation skills are built; that is, the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.

Council for a Strong America, a national organization of business leaders, law enforcement professionals, and retired military, recently completed a *Citizen Readiness Index Report*<sup>ii</sup> that measures citizen-readiness along three indicators needed to demonstrate whether today's young adults (17 to 24) are contributing to a strong citizenry. The Report gave Connecticut an overall 'B' rating and the following individual indicator-specific grades:

- A 'B' in Workforce Preparedness—11% of young adults in Connecticut were not employed or in school
- A 'B' in Crime—9 of every 100 arrests in the state were of young adults
- A 'C' in Military Qualification—69% of Connecticut's young adults were deemed ineligible for military service, based on literacy, numeracy, and/or physical fitness

Businesses in Connecticut need employees that are job-ready, team capable, and well prepared, yet the indicators of readiness for the military are similar to those expected for the general workforce. Cutting funding from programs that serve our youngest children will potentially lead to a failing grade, which would lead Connecticut in the wrong direction.

Parents as Teachers is a nationally recognized voluntary, evidenced-based early childhood home visiting model that promotes the optimal early development, learning and health of children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. Parents as Teachers has a core value of working with moms and dads, prenatally all the way through their children's first year of Kindergarten, not just first time moms, but also families with multiple children. It is the most widely replicated home visiting model in the country serving families in all 50 states and in 110 tribal communities. In Connecticut Parents as Teachers' services are delivered at 73 Family Resource Centers through 36 affiliates, reaching 764 families.

The delivery of Parents as Teachers is simple. Trained parent educators, who are often early childhood educators, social workers, nurses or other trained professionals, work through local schools, hospitals, or other agencies to strengthen families. The model includes four components. **Personal visits** are individualized, strength-based visits where parent educators focus on child development and parent-child interaction, and empower parents to interact with their children in a way that facilitates healthy development. **Screenings** help parents identify possible developmental delays and health problems early so that children can be referred to appropriate services and therapies. A strong **community resource network** helps bridge the gap between resources available and families' needs and, finally, **group meetings** allow enrolled parents to meet with other parents of young children as a support group, allowing them to practice parenting skills and build a strong family-community connection.

Every personal visit includes a focus on family well-being so parent educators help parents set family goals in areas such as finding employment, finding health insurance, or getting a better education to help increase family self-sufficiency and independence. Researchers and experts have found that the social determinants of health—factors such as social support, parental stress, access to insurance, income and poverty status, and environmental conditions—affect families and their children. Home visiting programs are an essential intervention and prevention program to address these social determinants of health. Embedded in the Family Resource Centers, parent educators can offer an array of resources and supports.

Children need safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments to grow up healthy and ready for the world. And, that's where PAT comes in. Because children don't come with instructions and all parents could use a little help.

PAT parent educators:

- Understand and respect that parents are their children's first and most influential teacher
- Work with families anywhere along the continuum from pregnancy through Kindergarten—the earlier the better
- Partner with parents to identify and build their parenting strengths
- Focus on family well-being and goal setting

- Identify health issues and developmental delays in children early and refer families to community resources that reduce the cost of later remediation
- Build healthy social networks for parents of young children
- Are a trusted, informed resource—and, shoulder

As a result, parents enrolled in Parents as Teachers become advocates for their children, for life.

Parents as Teachers is a proven and well-researched strategy for reducing the need for remedial education, increasing school readiness, reducing instances of child abuse and neglect, promoting family economic self-sufficiency, and parent involvement in their children's care and education. The model also meets the evidence-based criteria of the federally funded Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program and has been selected by 35 states to be replicated through that initiative. Indeed, 13 of the 15 sites across the state that receive MIECHV funds offer the Parents as Teachers model.

Outcomes include:

- improved language and literacy for young and school age children
- increased entire family engagement in children's learning and engagement with their schools
- increased school achievement for children
- identification and treatment of developmental delays well before the K-12 years
- improved parenting knowledge and skills
- decreased child maltreatment
  - one randomized trial of Parents a Teachers found that the use of harsh parenting was significantly lower in PAT families
  - In New York, a quasi-experimental evaluation showed PAT was associated with lower rates of suspected cases of abuse and neglect in a review of DSS and school based records.
  - A PAT program in Maine focusing on families with involvement with Child Protective Services, found that once entered into a PAT program 95% of families had no further substantiated reports or allegations of child abuse or neglect.
- increased family self-sufficiency
- child health outcomes, such as:
  - increased child immunization rates
  - lower body mass index rates
  - higher birth weights
  - improved family well-being
  - increased family health literacy

The Parents as Teachers National Center, which developed the evidence-based model, and the research-based curricula used by the models, provides training, technical assistance and quality assurance. The national center requires its affiliates maintain fidelity to the model and monitors performance. In your fiduciary and oversight role, this committee should be reassured that Parents as Teachers affiliates funded through the Family Resource Centers are held accountable in providing high quality services to Connecticut families.

Finally, and significantly, home visiting is cost-effective. One state institute for public policy issued to policymakers and budget writers a list of evidence-based programs that are well researched and that can with a high degree of certainty, lead to better statewide outcomes coupled with a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Those policy analysts found that **Parents as Teachers has a cost benefit ratio of \$3.29—it saves taxpayers money.** <sup>iii</sup>

**Again, the Parents as Teachers National Center respectfully asks that you reconsider the proposed cuts in funding and the restructured access to those funds in this proposed budget and fully fund the Family Resource Centers at the level in the current, FY 2017-2018 budget.**

For more information about Parents as Teachers, please contact Alison Gee, VP Government and Community Engagement at [alison.gee@parentsasteachers.org](mailto:alison.gee@parentsasteachers.org) or Pam Langer, Connecticut PAT State Leader at [connpat.langer1@gmail.com](mailto:connpat.langer1@gmail.com)

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://literacy.rice.edu/thirty-million-word-gap>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/158-2016-citizen-readiness-index-executive-summary>

<sup>iii</sup> A Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) report entitled “Return on Investment: Evidence-based Options to Improve Statewide Outcomes,” found that Parents as Teachers has a benefit to cost ratio of \$3.39. The Washington State legislature has directed WSIPP to identify “evidence-based” policies. The goal is to provide Washington policymakers and budget writers with a list of well-researched public policies that can, with a high degree of certainty, lead to better statewide outcomes coupled with a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The summary report information can be found here: <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/118> Programs are searchable by name.